

With the outbreak of the COVID - 19 virus, now more than ever people are escaping to Pima County's outdoor parks and trail systems for their mental and physical health. It is critical everyone be aware of and practice recommendations provided by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to prevent the spread of COVID - 19. All the safe practices we have been observing in our daily lives must translate when recreating outdoors as well. Given the increased number of people using trails, below is a detailed list of important practices to keep things safe and enjoyable for everyone in our outdoor spaces. Responsibility and awareness starts with the individual and we all must be willing to adjust our normal behavior to accommodate the current circumstances. It is exceedingly important trail users take that extra step to be courteous and practice proper trail etiquette during times like these.

1. **Know when to stay home:** If you are sick or exhibiting symptoms of illness, stay home and allow yourself ample time to recover.
2. **Be flexible and have a plan B:** Parking is limited at trailheads. If you arrive at a trailhead and the parking lot is full, be prepared to go elsewhere. A full trailhead is a good indication that nearby trails are too crowded. Parking is limited to trailhead parking lots only: do not park along roadways, on private property, block driveways or block bicycle lanes. There are many trailheads and trail access points in Pima County, it may take more driving around than you typically do for trail access.
3. **Explore and research:** Popular trails make up a small percentage of what is available for trail users. Use this time of uncertainty to explore less popular areas, perhaps areas you've never been to. Spend time doing research to familiarize yourself with other trails in Pima County and their various access points. Not only will this help spread out trail use, but who knows, you just might find a new favorite trail.
4. **Physical distancing:** Maintaining a minimum physical distance of 6-feet from each other is paramount whether indoors or outdoors. Given the potential for wind to facilitate transmission of airborne particles, physical distancing is crucial in outdoor spaces. If you are 2 - 3 steps away from someone, you are too close to them. This can be especially challenging on a narrow trail when users are passing each other. Take extra time and allow others extra time to step further off the trail than you normally would. Some people prefer to be in groups and talk while on the trail. Adjust your behavior to ensure proper physical distancing. Practice spacing out and if you are too far away from your hiking buddy to carry on a conversation, that's okay, you still have the comfort of hiking with another person.
5. **Keep moving on the trail:** When passing other trail users, keep moving past them. If you are accustomed to stopping and having conversations with fellow trail users, recognize the importance of not congregating and maintaining physical separation. Keep in mind you are not being unfriendly, you are being responsible.
6. **Keep your ears open:** If you must listen to music while on the trail, do so at a lower volume than usual, ideally leaving one ear open to hear other users approaching from behind. It is especially important to be aware of other trail users and the environment around you.

7. **Avoid touching park infrastructure:** What trail user hasn't touched a map sign to point out where they are or where they are going? Now is not the time to be touching trail signs or other park infrastructure for that matter.
8. **Bring hand cleaning products with you to the trailhead:** Remember to throw hand sanitizer, wipes or soap and water in the car before you leave home. We all know how important clean hands are right now.
9. **Do not litter and do not pick up garbage that is not yours:** We always appreciate when kind trail users take it upon themselves to pick up litter left behind by others, but now is not the time to be doing that. It might be hard for you, but just leave it, parks maintenance staff will take care of it. Always practice [Leave No Trace](#) principles.
10. **Be self-sufficient:** Access to park amenities might be limited and it is best to avoid contact with any kind of surfaces anyway. Don't rely on drinking fountains, bring an ample supply of water for yourself. Don't share water or snacks. If present, avoid using park facilities such as garbage cans and restrooms if possible. Bring a trash bag with you and be prepared to remove any waste you generate.
11. **Know your limits and your environment:** Know your ability level and don't take unnecessary risks. With increasing seasonal temperatures, be aware of environmental factors such as heat and venomous wildlife such as rattlesnakes. Avoid putting yourself in an emergency situation and causing unnecessary strain on first responders and medical facilities.
12. **Dogs:** Of course dog owners want to get out with their four-legged companions, but it must be done responsibly and with respect to other trail users. Please note that violating any of the rules below constitutes a Class 2 misdemeanor and is punishable by law.
 - Dogs must be leashed at all times on no more than a 6-foot leash, no exceptions.
 - Dog waste must be cleaned up immediately and taken back to your car or carried with you. Do not leave dog waste bags along the trail, even if you plan to pick them up on your way back.
 - It is your responsibility to remove your dog's waste from the site completely in your vehicle and properly dispose of it off site.
 - Respect areas where dogs are not allowed. Although dogs are allowed in most Pima County Parks, dogs are NOT allowed in Tucson Mountain Park.
13. **Mountain Bicyclists:** FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH AND FOLLOW PROPER TRAIL ETIQUETTE AT ALL TIMES.
 - Mountain bicyclists must yield to all other users, no exceptions. This means coming to a complete stop, dismounting your bicycle and stepping off the trail to allow others to

pass. Having your bicycle in between you and other trail users is a good method to increase physical distancing.

- Trails are not race courses, they are pathways for people of all ages and ability levels to enjoy nature at their own pace. Slow down, look ahead, and be prepared to stop and move off the trail at any time.
- When approaching other users from behind, announce yourself well ahead of time and give them ample time to step off the trail. Do not sneak up on, startle or encroach on the space of other users.
- Electric bicycles are NOT allowed in Pima County parks and trail systems, no exceptions.

14. **Equestrians:** Now is not the best time to show up at a busy trailhead with multiple horse trailers. Having more than a few horses on a narrow trail on a busy day is a recipe for trail congestion. Please consider using the areas you are familiar with that are less popular. If you are part of an equestrian organization, please consider spreading out in smaller groups at different locations. Keep in mind that horse droppings on the trail detracts from most trail users' experience. While it may not be feasible to clean up on the trail, please do so at the trailhead.

15. **Hikers and runners:** If you are approaching other trail users from behind, make sure you announce yourself ahead of time and allow others ample time to move off the trail. Pedestrians must yield to equestrians.

16. **Assess trail conditions:** If it has rained recently, assess the trail before going out. If the trail is wet or muddy to the point that a depression is left in the soil when walking or riding, the trail is too wet to use. Stay off wet trails to avoid damaging them.